THE

Experienced Christian's Magazine,

For NOVEMBER, 1805,

PORTRAIT OF

THE REV. WOOLMAN HICKSON.

WOOLMAN HICKSON was a native of Maryland. He was called of God (almost without means) to forsake the wickedness and folly which his neighbourhood and his friends were daily in the habit of. He was supposed to be in a state of melancholy. His parents used their influence with threats to bring him back to his folly and gaiety; but he was proof against all remonstrances. The disposition of his mind was to serve his God in sobriety and sincerity. He was at length forced (being under age) to go on board of a privateer, and he was put into the cabin as steward; but he could not do as they wanted him, nor hear them in the cabin swear and blaspheme without reproving them. He went a small cruise, and on their return he was discharged with reproaches, called a quaker, and many other opprobrious names, because he read, prayed, and reproved sin. He then got farther instructions by some of God's people. He experienced a deep sense of his own sad state by nature, and his guilt from a want of conformity to the law of God. He stood amazed when he heard the law say, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." He went humbly to the throne of grace in the name of the Lord Jesus, and God for

Christ's sake pardoned his sins, and gave him the knowledge of it in the twentieth year of his age. He then saw why he had been so cast down, and that it was to prepare him to comfort and help many others, which he soon began to do by preaching from house to house, day and night, the tidings of salvation through faith in Jesus.

His zeal for the cause of God, and the interest of Christ's kingdom, was very great. He planted many societies, and watered many more. He was famous for gaining on the prejudice of men, and quickening them in devotion, and stirring them to act for the church of Christ. He set many houses of worship on foot in the different states where worship had been neglected. He was affectionate to all, respected all, and feared no opposition. He was all things to all men, (sin excepted,) that he might gain the more.

In sobriety he was a pattern. Though a youth, he was an example for one of seventy. The mighty grace of God furnished him for every good work, and success attended his labour, as many can witness to their great joy in the Lord till this day.

He was taken away from the church of America, in the prime of life, and in the midst of his usefulness by a consumption of the lungs, occasioned by a heavy cold, which he caught in the discharge of his duty.

After a short confinement, which he bore with the fortitude of an experienced Christian, he departed this life in the city of New-York, in the year 1783, and in the 28th year of his age, in the full assurance of that faith and hope which he had so indefatigably announced to others, without one murmur or fear. He who trusteth in the Lord shall not make haste, even when the overflowing scourge shall come: his defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure. Adieu, son of America, adieu.

AN EXTRACT FROM THE NARRATIVE OF THE SURPRISING WORK OF GOD, IN THE CONVERSION OF MANY HUNDRED SOULS IN NORTHAMPTON, &c.

By the Rev. Mr. EDWARDS, A. D. 1736.

[Continued from page 175.]

HER great terror she said was, that she had sinned against God. Her distress grew more and more for three days; until, as she said, she saw nothing but blackness of darkness before her, and her very flesh trembled for fear of God's wrath: she wondered and was astonished at herself that she had been so concerned for her body, and had applied so often to physicians to heal that, and had neglected her soul. Her sinfulness appeared with a very awful aspect to her, especially in three things, viz. her original sin, and her sin in murmuring at God's providence, in the weakness and afflictions she had been under, and in want of duty to parents, though others had looked upon her to excel in dutifulness. On Saturday, she was so earnestly engaged in reading the bible and other books, that she continued in it, searching for something to relieve her, till her eyes were so dim, that she could not know the letters. Whilst she was thus engaged in reading, prayer, and other religious exercises, she thought of those words of Christ, wherein he warns us not to be as the heathen, that think they shall be heard for their much speaking; which, she said, led her to see that she had trusted to her own prayers and religious performances, and now she was put to a nonplus, and knew not which way to turn herself, or where to seek relief.

While her mind was in this posture, her heart, she said, seemed to fly to the minister for refuge, hoping that he could give her some relief. She came the same day to her brother, with the countenance of a person in distress, expostulating with him, why he had not told her more of her sinfulness, and earnestly enquiring of him what she

should do. She seemed that day to feel in herself an enmity against the bible, which greatly affrighted her. Her sense of her own exceeding sinfulness continued increasing from Thursday till Monday; and she gave this account of it, that it had been an opinion, which till now she had entertained, that she was not guilty of Adam's sin, nor any way concerned in it, because she was not active in it; but that now she saw she was guilty of that sin, and all over defiled by it; and that the sin which she brought into the world with her was alone sufficient to condemn her.

On the Sabbath-day she was so ill that her friends thought it not best that she should go to public worship, of which she seemed very desirous; but when she went to bed on the Sabbath-day night, she took up a resolution that she would the next morning go to the minister, hoping to find some relief there. As she awaked on Monday morning, a little before day, she wondered within herself at the easiness and calmness she felt in her mind, which was of that kind which she never felt before: as she thought of this, such words as these were in her mind;—The words of the Lord are pure words, health to the soul, and marrow to the bones. And then these words came to her mind, The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin; which were accompanied with a lively sense of the excellency of Christ, and his sufficiency to satisfy for the sins of the whole world. She then thought of that expression, 'Tis a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun; which words then seemed to her to be very applicable to Jesus Christ. By these things her mind was led into such contemplations and views of Christ, as filled her exceeding full of joy. She told her brother in the morning that she had seen (i. e. in realising views by faith) Christ the last night, and that she had really thought that she had not knowledge enough to be converted; but, says she, God can make it quite easy! On Monday she felt all day a constant sweetness in her soul. She had a repetition of the same discoveries of Christ three mornings together, that she had on Monday morning, and much in the same manner, at each time, waking a little before day; but brighter and brighter every time.

At the last time on Wednesday morning, while in the enjoyment of a spiritual view of Christ's glory and fulness, her soul was filled with distress for Christless persons, to consider what a miserable condition they were in; and she felt in herself a strong inclination immediately to go forth to warn sinners; and proposed it the next day to her brother to assist her in going from house to house; but her brother restrained her, telling her of the unsuitableness of such a method. She told one of her sisters that day, that she loved all mankind, but especially the people of God. Her sister asked her why she loved all mankind? She replied, because God had made them. After this, there happened to come into the shop where she was at work, three persons that were thought to be lately converted; her seeing them as they stepped in one after another into the door, so affected her, and so drew forth her love to them, that it overcame her, and she almost fainted: and when they began to talk of the things of religion, it was more than she could bear; they were obliged to cease on that account. It was a very frequent thing with her to be overcome with a flow of affection to them she thought godly, in conversation with them, and sometimes only at the sight of them.

She had many extraordinary discoveries of the glory of God and Christ, sometimes in some particular attributes, and sometimes in many. She gave an account that once, as those four words passed through her mind, WISDOM, JUSTICE, GOODNESS, and TRUTH, her soul was filled with a sense of the glory of each of these divine attributes, but especially the last. Truth, said she, sunk the deepest! And therefore, as these words passed, this was repeated, TRUTH, TRUTH! Her mind was so swallowed up with a sense of the glory of God's truth and other perfections, that she said, it seemed as though her life was going, and that she saw it was easy with God to take away her life by discoverses of himself. Soon after this she went to a private religious meeting, and her mind was full of a sense and view of the glory of God all the time; and when the exercise was ended, some asked her concerning what she had experienced: and she began to give them an account; but as she was relating it, it revived such a sense of the

same things, that her strength failed; and they were obliged to take her, and lay her upon the bed. Afterwards she was greatly affected, and rejoiced with these words, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

She had several days together a sweet sense of the excellency and loveliness of Christ in his meekness, which disposed her continually to be repeating over these words, which were sweet to her, MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART, MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART. She once expressed herself to one of her sisters, to this purpose, that she had continued whole days and whole nights in a constant ravishing view of the glory of God and Christ, having enjoyed as much as her life could bear. Once as her brother was speaking of the dying love of Christ, she told him that she had such a sense of it, that the mere mentioning it was ready to overcome her.

Once, when she came to me, she told how that at such and such a time she thought she saw as much of God, and had as much joy and pleasure, as was possible in this life, and that yet afterwards God discovered himself yet far more abundantly, and she saw the same things that she had seen before, yet more clearly, and in another, and far more excellent and delightful manner, and was filled with a more exceeding sweetness; she likewise gave me such an account of the sense she once had from day to day of the glory of Christ, and of God, in his various attributes, that it seemed to me she dwelt for days together in a kind of beatific vision of God; and seemed to have, as I thought, as immediate an intercourse with him, as a child with a father: and at the same time, she appeared most remote from any high thought of herself, and of her own sufficiency; but was like a little child, and expressed a great desire to be instructed, telling me that she longed very often to come to me for instruction, and wanted to live at my house, that I might tell her her duty.

She often expressed a sense of the glory of God appearing in the trees, and growth of the fields, and other works of God's hands. She told her sister that lived near the heart of the town, but now, says she, I think it much more pleasant to sit and see the wind blowing the trees,

and to behold in the country what God has made. She had sometimes the powerful breathings of the Spirit of God on her soul while reading the scripture, and would express a sense that she had of the certain truth and divinity thereof. She sometimes would appear with a pleasant smile on her countenance; and when her sister took notice of it, and asked why she smiled, she replied, I am brim full of a sweet feeling within! She often used to express how good and sweet it was to lie low before God, and the lower, says she, the better! and that it was pleasant to think of lying in the dust, all the days of her life, mourning for sin. She was wont to manifest a great sense of her own meanness and dependence. She often expressed an exceeding compassion, and pitiful love, which she found in her heart towards persons in a Christless condition; which was sometimes so strong, that as she was passing by such in the streets, or those that she feared were such, she would be overcome by the sight of them. She once said, that she longed to have the whole world saved, she wanted, as it were, to pull them all to Christ; she could not bear to have one lost.

She had great longings to die, that she might be with Christ; which increased till she thought she did not know how to be patient to wait till God's time should come. But when once she felt those longings, she thought with herself, If I long to die, why do I go to physicians? Whence she concluded that her longings for death were not well regulated. After this, she often put it to herself, which she should choose, whether to live or to die, to be sick or to be well, and she found she could not tell, till at last she found herself disposed to say these words:—I am quite willing to live, and quite willing to die; quite willing to be sick, and quite willing to be well; and quite willing for any thing that God will bring upon me! And then, said she, I felt myself perfectly easy, in a full submission to the will of God. She then lamented much, that she had been so eager in her longings for death, as it argued want of such a resignation to God as ought to be. She seemed henceforward to continue in this resigned frame till death.

After this her illness increased upon her: And once

after she had before spent the greater part of the night in extreme pain, she awaked out of a little sleep with these words in her heart and mouth: I am willing to suffer for Christ's sake, I am willing to spend and be spent for Christ's sake, I am willing to spend my life, even my very life, for Christ's sake! And though she had an extraordinary resignation, with respect to life or death, yet the thoughts of dying were exceeding sweet to her. At a time when her brother was reading in Job, concerning worms feeding on the dead body, she appeared with a pleasant smile; and being enquired of about it, she said, it was sweet to her to think of her being in such circumstances. At another time, when her brother mentioned to her the danger there seemed to be that the illness she then laboured under might be an occasion of her death, it filled her with joy that almost overcame her. At another time, when she met a company following a corpse to the grave, she said, it was sweet to her to think, that they would in a little time, follow her in like manner.

Her illness in the latter part of it was seated much in her throat; and swelling inward, filled up the pipe, so that she could swallow nothing but what was perfectly liquid, and but very little of that, and with great and long strugglings and stranglings, that which she took in, flying out at her nostrils, till she at last could swallow nothing at all. She had a raging appetite to food, so that she told her sister, when talking with her about her circumstances, that the worst bit she threw to her swine, would be sweet to her; but yet when she saw that she could not swallow it, she seemed to be as perfectly contented without it, as if she had no appetite to it. Others were greatly moved to see what she underwent, and were filled with admiration at her unexampled patience. At a time when she was striving in vain to get down a little food, something liquid, and was very much spent with it; she looked upon her sister with a smile, saying, O sister, this is for my good! At another time, when her sister was speaking of what she underwent, she told her, that she lived an heaven upon earth for all that. She used sometimes to say to her sister, under her extreme sufferings, It is good to be so! Her sister once asked her, why she said so;

Why, says she, because God would have it so: it is best that things should be as God would have them: it looks best to me. After her confinement, as they were leading her from the bed to the door, she seemed overcome by the sight of things abroad, as shewing forth the glory of the being that made them. As she lay on her death-bed, she would often say these words, God is my friend! And once looking upon her sister with a smile, said, O sister! how good it is! how sweet and comfortable it is to consider and think of heavenly things! and used this argument to persuade her sister to be much in such meditations.

She expressed, on her death-bed, an exceeding longing, both for persons in a natural state, that they might be converted, and for the godly that they might see and know more of God. And when those that looked on themselves as in a Christless state came to see her, she would be greatly moved with compassionate affection. One in particular that seemed to be in great distress about the state of her soul, and had come to see her from time to time, she desired her sister to persuade not to come any more, because the sight of her so wrought on her compassions, that it overcame her nature. The same week that she died, when she was in distressing circumstances as to her body, some of the neighbours that came to see her, asked if she was willing to die? She replied, that she was quite willing either to live or die; she was willing to be in pain; she was willing to be so always as she was then, if that was the will of God. She willed what God willed. They asked her whether she was willing to die that night? She answered, Yes, if it be God's will. And seemed to speak all with that perfect composure of spirit, and with such a cheerful and pleasant countenance, that it filled them with admiration.

She was very weak a considerable time before she died, having pined away with famine and thirst, so that her flesh seemed to be dried upon her bones; and therefore could say but little, and manifested her mind very much by signs. She said she had matter enough to fill up all her time with talk, if she had but strength. A few days before her death, some asked her, whether she held her

integrity still? whether she was not afraid of death? She answered to this purpose, that she had not the least degree of fear of death. They asked her why she would be so confident? She answered If I should say otherwise, I should speak contrary to what I know: there is, says she, indeed a dark entry, that looks something dark, but on the other side there appears such a bright shining light, that I cannot be afraid! She said not long before she died, that she used to be afraid how she should grapple with death; but, says she, God has shewed me that he can make it easy in great pain. Several days before she died, she could scarcely say any thing but just Yes, and No, to questions that were asked her, for she seemed to be dying for three days together; but seemed to continue in an admirable sweet composure of soul, without any interruption, to the last, and died as a person that went to sleep, without any struggling, about noon, on Friday, June 27, 1735.

She had long been infirm, and often had been exercised with great pain; but she died chiefly of famine. It was, doubtless, partly owing to her bodily weakness, that her nature was so often overcome, and ready to sink with gracious affection; but yet the truth was, that she had more grace, and greater discoveries of God and Christ, than the present frail state did well consist with. She wanted to be where strong grace might have more liberty; and be without the clog of a weak body; there she longed to be, and there she doubtless now is. She was looked upon amongst us, as a very eminent instance of Christian experience; but this is but a very broken and imperfect account I have given of her. Her eminency would much more appear, if her experiences were fully related, as she was wont to express and manifest them, while living. I once read this account to some of her pious neighbours, who were acquainted with her, who said to this purpose, that the picture fell much short of the life; and particularly that it much failed of duly representing her humility, and that admirable lowliness of heart, that at all times appeared in her. But there are, (blessed be God) many living instances, of much the like nature, and in some things no less extraordinary.

For the Experienced Christian's Magazine.

By a female correspondent.

TO THE EDITOR.

Reverend Sir,

BROTHER MILLER has lately acquainted me with your intention of gaining all the information you could respecting the life and experience of our dear departed friend and sister Anne Oakley. I feel willing to cast in my mite, but find I am not adequate to the task, and fear I shall not do justice to the character and memory of that most amiable of women. For the space of ten years I had the happiness to be intimately acquainted with her; and shortly after our acquaintance commenced, I was convinced she was a person of true genuine piety. In her I found a sincere and constant friend; she was a partaker of my sorrows; I was not insensible to hers. We have had happy seasons together. Many days and nights we have spent in company with each other. A small part of the time was taken up in sleep: one night in particular we met and were so engaged in conversation that we almost forgot repose was necessary to support our feeble natures, time glided sweetly and insensibly away, and when day-light made its appearance, we were amazed at the shortness of the night, though we had not closed our eyes to sleep. I always found it good to be where she was, to hear the wisdom that flowed from those lips which are now closed in death. Her discourse was edifying. Her words were seasoned with salt fit to administer grace to the hearers. Sometimes I thought she appeared more like one descended from the upper regions, than an inhabitant of this lower world, though at other times I found she was not wholly freed from the frailties of human nature, which is discernable in every creature. Her zeal for God was great. She never seemed so happy as when she was doing something to promote the interest of Christ's kingdom in the world. The fervency of her

private devotions was almost unequalled, by few exceeded. How often have I heard her wrestling and agonizing with God, in mighty prayer! crying out, in the language of Jacob, I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me. She was not soon weary of being upon her knees, but much of her time was taken up in this way. She was fervent in spirit serving the Lord. In early youth she embarked for heaven, and stood a pattern for the young and rising generation. She lived with eternity in view. I am persuaded her bodily weakness helped to promote her advancement in the way to glory. She has often told me she found it good to be afflicted. She experienced many precious outpourings of the Spirit of God, and such powerful manifestations of his love, that it appeared as if the clay tenement could hardly contain the happy soul that was expanding and enlarging to make the Saviour room. In the silent watch of night, when her body appeared locked up in sleep, I have heard her clap her hands and cry, Glory to God. Most of her time she seemed to enjoy calm peace and sweet serenity of mind, arising from the rectitude of her heart, and the purity of her intention. But towards the close of her days, the sunshine of her soul appeared in some measure to be clouded by grief. Her trials were great; her temptations strong and many: but she still retained her integrity. She knew the God in whom she trusted was able to deliver, and through him she obtained a glorious deliverance, was conducted safely through life, and when passing the valley and shadow of death, she feared no evil.

I wished to have been present at her decease, as I expected her end would be triumphant. So it proved, but I had not the happiness to see it. Though I spent much time with her in her last illness, she was then too weak to say much; but her lips, like Hannah's of old, were often seen to move in addressing the Majesty of heaven. One day I heard her agonizing with God in fervent prayer, earnestly entreating him to be with her while she was passing over Jordan. Once a person of her acquaintance discoursing with her was passing some encomiums upon her for her diligence and faithfulness to God in the path of duty, and telling her she would soon rest from her la-

bours, and her good works would follow her. With hands and eyes uplifted to heaven, she made this reply, Good works, what good works have I done? I have only believed in Jesus Christ. Speaking to me at a particular time of her approaching dissolution, she told me she had no desire to live long, if she was called away she should think she was taken from the evil to come; if she lived she feared her mind would be entangled with the cares and concerns of this world, and too much drawn off from the object of her love. She fell asleep A. D. 1804, aged 25.

Penning these lines, dear brother, has cost me many tears, as it has brought past scenes fresh to my remembrance. The memory of this most angelic of women will be dear to me as long as my breast continues to throb or my pulse to beat with the remains of life. I have left a number of her letters with brother Miller for your inspection. I at first thought to have transcribed some passages from them myself; but I afterwards considered your judgment was so far superior to mine, I thought I would leave it with you to make choice of such as you conceived would be most useful to mankind.

I must now conclude with wishing you the greatest success in your labours, and praying that heaven's blessings may descend and ever rest upon you and yours. In great haste, I remain your sincere friend and sister in the Lord Jesus.

S. F.

LETTER from ANNE H. OAKLEY to S. F.

My very dear sister,

I HAVE neglected writing to you too long. I hope you will excuse me. I have wished to see you, and have an opportunity to discourse with you on the subject of my trials. I think I never read the book of Job before, as I have of late. Almost every word seemed applicable to my condition. I have truly waded through deep waters. But if I may be made perfect through sufferings, I desire to bear whatever is laid upon me, remembering a saying I have often heard, that the rougher the way the shorter

the stay. O sister, may God help us to bear each other on our minds, and constantly help each other. I feel, my sister, as if our love would be lasting as David's and Jonathan's was to each other. My dear sister, I have wished to write to you, and now I have begun my feeble frame gives out, and I must soon draw to a close. I am oppressed with a severe cough and violent pain in my head, which renders me unfit for every duty; but our blessed High Priest can be touched with feeling forces. O sister, pay me a visit soon. Excuse my haste. Farewell.

ANNA HATFIELD OAKLEY.

THE EXPERIENCE OF

THE REV. WILLIAM THATCHER,

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

[Continued from page 174.]

BUT next morning, reflecting on my case, my thoughts were as follows: "These Methodists know their sins forgiven. It is not so with me. O that I had lived when Christ was on earth, or that he had been among us in the flesh in this our day! I would directly apply to him for the forgiveness of our sins, and I know he would not deny me, for he never sent one empty away. But how shall I get access to him?" I again reasoned thus: "Surely Christ is God; and of course, *really* now present, and he is as God, he cannot change,—therefore will not turn me away any more than if he was here in the flesh." But the question returned, How shall I have access to him?—On which my mind was surprisingly attracted to such a view of heavenly things as I cannot express. It appeared to me as if I had a view of God the Father's, in inaccessible glory, and Christ in his twofold nature sitting at HIS right hand, and shewing his wounds, exhibiting all the amazing scene of his passion and death, and signified that it was

for me, even me, that he suffered all this; which view gave me such a sense of the enormity of my sins, and of the justice of God in my damnation, as before I could have no conception of; while at the same time I was struck with such a sense of the LOVE of God in giving Christ to suffer all this for me, as I had no idea of before. Meanwhile it appeared to me that there was such a fulness in his merit, the merit of his sufferings and death, as made a full and complete atonement for all my sins; and I plainly saw that God could now be just, and yet freely and fully forgive all my sins, and saw nothing remained for me to do but to believe heartily in Christ as my Saviour, while I felt convinced, that such love as gave a Saviour for me, would freely give pardon on the condition of the act of faith. It seemed as if Christ spread his merit before his Father in my behalf, and the Father accepted of it. The Son, smiling on me, said, "SON, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE." But thought I, Is it so, or is it imanation?—when on a sudden the SPIRIT bore witness with my spirit to the reality of it, and that I was a child of God!!! Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good-will to men.—Good-will to me, a miserable sinner, saved by free grace. These foregoing meditations and exercises, last mentioned, passed in my mind and heart, while I was sitting in a circle of loquacious company, in all the usual folly of trifling conversation. Meanwhile I seemed as completely in secret before God, as if I had been alone in a grove at midnight. And through the day I was sometimes so overwhelmed with the love of God, as put my whole mortal frame in a tremor; and although I was apprehensive that my emotion would have been discovered by some of the wicked circle with whom my employment then confined me, yet I do not recollect being interrupted by them, either with question or remark! So graciously did my blessed Saviour, at that critical time, cover me with his protecting hand.

It is now more than fifteen years since, and I have hitherto been preserved in the enjoyment of Divine love; which more fully confirms the genuineness of the blessed work that God has wrought in me.

I have only to add, that in March 1800, on the 29th

day, in a love-feast, I believe that God graciously blessed me with the witness of full sanctification; and I find the way to heaven still more and more delightful to me: and though I have to bear the cross of preaching to listening multitudes, yet my MASTER makes my daily cross delightsome by the refreshing of his grace. May I ever be more and more ready for the summons of death, which I apprehend is not far off.

WILLIAM THATCHER.

POETRY.

A PRAYER FOR THE PREACHERS.

1 LORD of the Harvest, hear
Our supplicating cry,
And every Gospel Messenger,
With labouring strength supply:
With well instructed zeal,
To make thy mercy known;
Their ministerial work fulfil,
And live to Thee alone.

2 To shew forth all thy praise,
Let them thy servants live;
Of every virtue, every grace,
A bright example give.
Let each by sinking rise,
By self-abasing fear,
And poor, and mean, in his own eyes,
And least of all appear.

3 Be this their single aim,
Thy glorious truths to spread:
As simple men, without a name,
Who hang on thee for bread:
Who never seek their own,
In blest obscurity,
Content to live and die unknown,
Or known to none but Thee.